14:Stewart E-5 (1936-1938)1944 NR13 Northern Paiute NR13
Washo NT20

N W 159 755 795* 797

dians' previous knowledge of peyote was contradictory: some heard that all who used peyote with Leo Okio had died; others remembered Tom Knudsen's statement that peyote cured. One Indian convert continued to be interpreter for the Baptist missionary, and Johnny Cleveland, Indian judge, urged attendance at the mission. In spite of belief in the miraculous power of peyote, kept alive by testimonials, only about a dozen meetings were held at Schurz; and only Mary D. Creek of the twenty or twenty-five who were active for about three months attended meetings after February, 1937.

N W [203]

Through their grapevine news system nearly all the Washo and Northern Paiute Indians soon heard of Ben Lancaster's medicine and meetings. Ben asked Sam to arrange meetings with his friends; and since Willie Smokey (W,2), his "cousin," was sick, a meeting was held for him on November 26, 1936, at the Dresslerville Indian Colony, a mile from Gardnerville. After a few meetings in Smokey's house, the crowds were so large that a canvas was put up in a circle, and meetings were conducted in the open in spite of freezing temperatures.

Everyone was invited and from seventy to a hundred persons attended. Probably his success prompted Ben to change the charitable manner used at Schurz, for now he preached the necessity of voluntary contributions of money. Though telling the Indians to give whatever they wished, Ben exaggerated the expense entailed in procuring peyote and the greater blessings received through larger contributions. The $4.00 to $5.00 received for a meeting at Schurz became $50 to $80. No doubt the Gardnerville Washo primarily came to the meetings to be cured of real or supposed ills. Those who were well learned that peyote would protect them and show them the right way to live. The entering wedge was through kinship and friendship, and usually when one member of a family joined, the rest followed.

Willie Smokey, councilman and leader in the Baptist mission, was respected for his sobriety and intelligence by Indians and whites. His family—wife, mother, three married children, and five unmarried, adult children—formed the nucleus of the Gardnerville cult, which was active until December, 1937. During that time, the Smokeys gave Ben baskets; beadwork; special foods, such as piñon-nut flour; many dinners; and all the money they could, which was a fair amount because all were working. They became so earnest that they never missed a meeting wherever held, as a result endangering their employment by tardiness or absence. Like Sam Dick, they seem to have been converted religiously, and in conversations after their separation from the cult they emphasized its spiritual and ethical qualities much more than its medicinal efficacy. They maintained that since Ben failed to correct certain unjust and irreligious acts of Sam Dick they could not attend meetings. (It was apparent, however, that jealousy and thwarted ambition were the real reasons.)

At Gardnerville, Ben Lancaster's peyotism flourished and declined much as had Lone Bear's cult four years earlier. By November, 1938, only one family of four active peyotists remained there;[10] and since June, 1938, Ben has refused their request for meetings because of the militant opposition.

After instituting meetings near Gardnerville, Ben and his wife traveled to and from meetings there and at Schurz, about sixty miles away. The road passes through Wellington in Smith Valley and Yerington in Mason Valley, where about two hundred Indians live in two colonies and on scattered ranches. Most of the older Indians remembered Ben; and although they are Northern Paiute, several traced distant kinship with him. At Wellington, Ben told James Keno (P,3), his "cousin-

[10] Two other active members are listed on Dresslerville census rolls, but they live elsewhere.